

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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Vyborg

1. The city of Vyborg seemed to be deserted [] only unarmed, uniformed military personnel. The Navy was most heavily represented. The station building was repaired, at least on the outside. In the area around the station yard, a number of women workers were cleaning up. From the train, no new building activity could be seen on the Karelian Isthmus.

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Leningrad

2. The Finland Station in Leningrad was particularly uncared for. The areas along the railroad line from Leningrad to about three and a half hours out of Moscow were damp and scrubby, with poor forest, and were very sparsely populated. The roads were particularly bad, with big, deep ruts. There was little traffic. Only some unusually large tractors were observed. About one hour's train ride from Moscow, the road network changed to well-maintained asphalt or cement highways.

Kharkov

3. [] reconstruction in Kharkov has proceeded further than in any other place in the Soviet Union. Despite this, the city was the place where the most traces of war were visible. There were large nine- and ten-story buildings completely gutted. There is a large tractor factory located in Kharkov. It was demolished during the war but has been completely rebuilt. [] the work force consists of about 20,000 men, of which 12 percent are officials. About 45 percent of the workers are women. Production consists of 55 to 58 diesel caterpillar tractors a day. About 35 percent of the output consists of spare parts. Practically all parts for the tractor are produced at the factory. The starter motor is a separate one-cylinder motor. Work at the factory is divided into two shifts, except in the foundry, where there are three.

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4. There is a large State farm near Kharkov. [redacted] Because of the fact that the area is very dry, about 130 mm of precipitation a year, the farmers have gone in completely for animal breeding. The farm contains 7,000 hectares of pasture land. The work is 97 percent mechanized. The number of people employed is about 650. In November 1953, the stock of animals consisted of about 2,300 head of cattle, 4,000 hogs, and 300 horses. Milk production is as much as 16,000 liters a day. The milk has a fat content of 3.9 to four percent. Each of the persons employed has 0.15 hectares of land as his own share and can dispose of its produce as he wishes. The profit from this sort of farm is divided in the following way: about 65 percent to the State, 15 percent for new building, two percent for culture funds, five percent for the purchase of inventory, nine percent for the payment of loans and insurance, and four percent for tax.

5. In the city of Kharkov there are 27 miniature railroads. These are exact copies of regular railroads in respect to trains, equipment, and operation. They are at a vacation place to which youths who want training in railroading are sent from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Yerevan

6. The population of Yerevan is said to be about 600,000. The city makes a dismal impression. The buildings and streets seem to be in particularly bad condition. The few vehicles which were observed were 1935 and 1936 Fords and Opels. There is no industry in the city aside from a factory for leather goods. The general supply of goods is very bad. Work continues on the storage capacity regulation of Lake Sevan outside of Yerevan. It is reported that power plant and industrial building has been planned. Neither military units nor individual military personnel were observed in Yerevan and environs.

General Observations on Soviet Building Activity

7. Overall building activity is apparently very great. According to law, each citizen is supposed to have nine square meters of floor space, excluding kitchen and utility room, plus free heat and light.

8. Most building workers are women. The work done is very poor by western standards. The joints are badly filled with mortar, all pipes are outside the walls, and the electric lines have insulators. Parquet floors are laid in all new buildings; but, as they are usually of raw wood, they look terrible. The apartments are generally two and three rooms with kitchen. According to propaganda, Kharkov has come farthest with the reconstruction of housing, about 60 percent. Many of the buildings have central heating. The pipes extend up to three kilometers from the central heating plant. [redacted]

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9. The kitchens are equipped with a gas stove, enameled sink, and a cupboard. The ceilings and walls are painted with a bright blue paint that is mixed with sawdust, probably to resist moisture, since the kitchens lack heat. All radiators are large, made of cast iron, and equipped with cocks. The rooms are usually papered.

10. The most striking thing about the new buildings was partly that they seemed to be the same in all cities in the Soviet Union (at least in those that were visited) and partly that all building material was delivered in standardized containers. No brick or mortar carriers were seen. Stone and mortar came in boxes and were hoisted up to the floor where they were to be used. Work norms were calculated according to the number of containers and were noted on a large bulletin board every day.

1. [redacted] Comment: Other information indicates that one has to pay for heat and light.

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